

Schoolteacher's War

Lt. Gen. Lucian Truscott of the second world war appears in the memoirs of other American generals (Clark's and Bradley's) as the commander with the ability to reconstruct real fighting formations from disorganized polyglot units. These included American, British, French, Italian, and Brazilian. The savior of the Anzio beachhead, this military diplomat could make thin-skinned Frenchmen work with each other, soothe Americans not on speaking terms, and even jolly along Brazilians.* Now in "Command Missions" General Truscott has told his own story. His book is outstanding among big-brass reminiscences.

Lucian Truscott was a country schoolteacher in Oklahoma before the first world war. He joined the cavalry, but did not get overseas. He was in command of the Fifth Cavalry Regiment in Texas after Pearl Harbor, and there his outposts screened 500 miles of desert country, guarded tunnels and bridges, and prepared for invasion (or anything) in a land where, he says, rumors and false reports "spread like the seeds of cottonwood borne on desert winds."

From Dieppe to Sicily: In April 1942, Truscott, having never heard a shot fired in anger, was assigned to the European theater and Lord Mountbatten's commandos. He organized the Rangers, saw at first hand some illuminating (and generally heartening) instances of American-British military cooperation, was present at the raid on Dieppe, and, when the 1943 invasion of France was postponed, commanded the American landing at Port Lyautey in North Africa.

The former schoolteacher later led the Third Infantry Division in a brilliant campaign in Sicily that reads like something done by another pedagogue, Stonewall Jackson, in the Civil War. After Anzio came the swift invasion through the south of France, and after the war was over Truscott replaced General Patton as military commander of Bavaria.

In outline, Truscott's "Command Missions" resembles the many memoirs of contemporary American military men. There are differences, however. Like William Tecumseh Sherman, another educator turned general, who announced at the outset that his autobiography was "written by himself," Truscott says he



International

General Truscott: Jackson and Sherman were schoolteachers, too

wrote his book "without professional assistance." Like Sherman, he has a natural vigorous prose style, acute political perceptions without over-all political theories, a dispassionate candor in appraising other generals, and a gift for concise phrasing that fills his book with axioms of modern warfare.

Faster Than Caesar: War of movement, surprise, ingenuity, thrift, speed, coordination, and swift responses to changing situations fill him with zest. War of positions, deadlocks, and stalemates like Anzio seem to drive him

nearly to despair. In North Africa he discovered to his discouragement that his infantrymen were marching far slower than Stonewall Jackson's. Truscott accordingly trained his men to march at 5 miles an hour. Almost immediately after the landing in Sicily, his infantrymen raced to capture Palermo, 100 miles away, in three days. They then pressed on to Messina, 105 miles east, using more than 500 captured mules and horses in mountainous country where vehicles could not go, almost an old-fashioned cavalry movement. "It seemed to me," said Truscott, "that the faster we could traverse the distance, the less time the enemy would have for demolitions and destruction." He was now pleased to watch his men move at a rate "Roman legions never excelled," confident that their speed would allow the enemy no time for reorganization. (COMMAND MISSIONS. By Lt. Gen. L.K. Truscott Jr. 570 pages. Dutton. \$7.50.)